

Out in the Mountains

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VERMONT'S FORUM FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER ISSUES

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10/11
forum

12/13
culture

7
the source

insideOITM Volume XII, Number 6

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FREE

Marriage Battle Moves to Green Mountains



Meet the Plaintiffs: back row - Lois Farnham, Peter Harrigan, Stan Baker, Nina Beck. front row - Holly Puterbaugh, Noah Jolles, Stacy Jolles

•Three couples sue the state for the right to marry

BY CHRISTOPHER MOES

COLCHESTER - Three couples took what some people see as the next step forward and others see as an unfortunate step back when they took to the courts their fight for legal recognition of their relationships to the same extent that the government encourages and honors heterosexual relationships.

The three couples, Stan Baker and Peter Harrigan of Shelburne; Nina Beck and Stacy Jolles of South Burlington, and Lois Farnham and Holly Puterbaugh, of Milton sued the State of Ver-

mont for discrimination against them for refusing to grant marriage licenses.

The couples are being represented by Susan Murray and Beth Robinson from the law firm of Langrock, Sperry & Wool in Middlebury, as well as Mary Bonauto of Gay and Lesbian Advocate and Defenders, (GLAD), a Boston-based law firm created to defend the rights of gays and lesbians. According to a statement from the lawyers, "the refusal to allow our clients to marry violates both state marriage laws and the state Constitution, which require that all citizens and families have the same access to the legal protections and obligations of civil marriage." Further, "marriage is a fundamental, individual personal choice, which should be available to all Vermonters."

The Attorney General, William Sorrell, has stated that he is going by the 1973 Attorney General decision to forbid such marriages, and has told the press that this issue should be decided by the legislature. Governor Dean, on the other hand, while not taking a position on the issue, called it "an emotional issue" and expressed that it belonged in the courts.

The law suit is a second judicial front in the same sex marriage battle. For three years now a similar case has been making its way through the Hawaii courts. On the legislative front the battle is less optimistic. Twenty five states have already outlawed same sex marriage, and DOMA, the defense of marriage act de-

MARRIAGE, 19

Courtside Seats:

A conversation with Vermont's most famous plaintiffs. The first in a three-part series profiling the couples involved.

BY CHRIS TEBBETS

Stan Baker, 51, is the Director of Outpatient Services at the Counseling Service of Addison County. He grew up in southern California and has lived in Vermont since 1971. After leaving a heterosexual marriage, Stan came out in 1993. He has served as Outright Vermont's Board Chair, and recently provided the voice over narration for the Vermont Freedom to Marry Task Force video. Peter Harrigan, 35, teaches Theatre and English at St. Michael's college, where he has also worked with the campus Ally Group and the Names Project AIDS Memorial Quilt presentation. He grew up in the Northeast and attended St. Michael's as an undergraduate.

The two of them met four years ago at a Vermont CARES dating workshop, where they were introduced by a mutual friend. A subsequent chance meeting at 135 Pearl led to a first date, and is the day they currently use as an anniversary. They moved in together in 1994 and then, says Harrigan, "Chase Manhattan Bank married us in May of '96," when they bought a home together in Shelburne. Previous discussions about a possible commitment ceremony or buying rings were displaced as the possibility of civil marriage loomed larger in their lives. The two appeared in the Task Force video and, says Harrigan, "when we got the video in the mail, we thought more about it, where we might fit in the issue." The two looked at the pros and cons of becoming plaintiffs, discussed it with friends and family, and eventually decided to take it on.



Peter Harrigan and Stan Baker

OITM: Why are you filing this suit?

Stan: The basic reason we're doing this is we're in love and we want to get married.... We can't do that legally. We can certainly do it symbolically, but not legally, and therefore that's an inequality, that's a right that we're being denied.

Peter: And our lives are really joined in every other respect, in terms of owning a home together, supporting each other, having our families merged, our finances merged. Most people who could legally get married after spending four years together probably would do that, but we're not able to.

Stan: I see it as a basic issue of equality. I don't see it as an assimilationist thing. I've heard some people say we're taking on the normal parts of the norm culture. I actually see it as a real strike for diversity rather than trying to make us all the same.

HARRIGAN, p9

St. Johnsbury Installs Gay Minister

ST. JOHNSBURY - On Sunday, September 14 at 4 p.m. Rev. Brendan Hadash will be installed as minister of the Universalist Church in St. Johnsbury, Vermont. Previously, Hadash served churches in Derby Line and West Burke, Vermont and in North Hatley, Quebec.

Hadash has long been active in the gay and lesbian community in Vermont. He is the founder of VOWS (Vermont Organization for Weddings of the Same Gender), a group of clergy and religious leaders in favor of gays and lesbians having the choice to marry. In 1995 he spoke and performed the "mass wedding" at the Vermont pride march. From 1988 to 1990 he was board secretary of Vermont CARES. He also has coordinated a gay men's social group.

"I am very excited to have been called as minister of

GAY MINISTER, p19